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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 MINSI 000225

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#)
SUBJECT: ELECTINN OFFICIAL TELLS EUR DAR KRAMER ELECTIONSQ
WILL BE DEMOCRATIC

REF: A. MINSK 044
B. MINSK 192

MINSK 03020225 001.2 OF 003

Classified By: Ambassador George Krol for Reasons 1.4 (B,D)Q

11. (C) Summary: VisiWkkQEUR DAS David Kramer met with Central Election Commission (CDC) Secretary Nikolai Lozovik on February 24. Lozovik stressed that Belarus, election process is democratic and expressed anger at the OSCE and U.S. for saying otherwise. He also criticized the opposition for complaining about alleged GOB violations to the electoral code. DAS Kramer retorted that Belarus had not addressed previous OSCE concerns about Belarus, electoral process, but told Lozovik that Belarus was still able to provide conditions for a free and fair election. When Kramer noted it was regrettable that the GCB arrested leaders of the Partnership election monitoring NGO, Lozovik responded that it was regrettable the U.S. was so concerned with the affairs of an illegal entity. In response to Kramer's warning that GOB officials would face serious consequences if elections were marred with fraud or violence, Lozovik asserted that it was foolish of the U.S. and EU to resort to such strong-arm tactics. End Summary.

12. (C) Visiting EUR DAS David Kramer, accompanied by Ambassador Krol and Embassy note-takers, met with Central Election Committee (CEC) Secretary Nikolai Lozovik on February 24 to discuss the upcoming March 19 presidential elections. CEC lawyer Nadezhna Kizolova and Counselor of the MFA's USA desk Andrei Rzhevsky also attended the meeting. Lozovik briefly described the CEC's structure and duties. As in previous meetings with Emboffs (ref A), Lozovik prided himself on being a former opposition member in Parliament who once tried to impeach President Lukashenko. Lozovik told Kramer there was no lack of opposition voices in the CEC.

Belarus, &Democratic8 Election Profess

Q3. (C) Lozovik maintained that the CEC's objective is to organize and carry out elections in accordance with Belarus' electoral code and international standards. Lozovik claimed the electoral code was the result of a &democratic8 compromise between the GOB and the opposition. Lozovik said the GOB circulated for comment a draft electoral code to all political parties, NGOs, and international organizations before being formally introduced in 2000. Therefore, Lozovik was disappointed and dismayed by OSCE and U.S. declarations that Belarus' electoral code was nonetheless undemocratic. Kramer pointed out that the OSCE had not addressed the CEC's concerns that followed the 2001 presidential elections, but the U.S. had not prematurely called the upcoming presidential elections illegitimate. Ambassador noted that it was the state media that had alleged that the U.S. had already cast judgment on the elections.

Kramer Mentions Arrests of Domestic Election Observers

14. (C) Kramer explained that the U.S. had serious concerns about the electoral process leading up to the March election because of GOB laws that do not ensure free and fair conditions. He cited the latest amendments to the criminal code on discrediting Belarusians and the detention of Partnership NGO election observers as a means to deter people from voicing their opinions. (If B) Lozovik was surprised that the U.S. took such interest in the arrests of members of an illegal and unregistered organization (Partnership). According to Lozovik, these activists work for personal ends and opined that their arrests would, to their own benefit, increase their reputation in the West. Kramer asked Lozovik if arresting people for participating in an unregistered organization was necessary and noted that it had become quite easy to be arrested in Belarus. Lozovik responded that people needed to observe the law.

Not Too Late to Improve Conditions

15. (C) Kramer conveyed Assistant Secretary Daniel Fried's statement that it was not too late for the GOB to provide

conditions for a free and fair election. For this reason the U.S. had not yet declared the pre3idential elections undemocRatic& Kramer reminded Lozovik that as a member of the MSCE, Belarus is obdigated to follow international norms. KRamer noted the U.S. was pleased that Belarus invited OSCE observers and registered all four presidential contend&rs,

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